CENTRAL NAUGATUCK VALLEY
REGIONAL ACTION COUNCIL

March 6, 2009

Good Afternoon Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

Re: <u>SB 847 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING PUBLIC HEALTH, Section 58(d)</u>

My name is Jennifer DeWitt, and I am the Executive Director of the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council, your RAC Director for the Waterbury area, serving 12 towns of Connecticut. I am writing to you today with strong concerns regarding Section 58(d) of the above mentioned Act, which transfers every year <u>$500,000</u> from the Pre-Trial Alcohol Substance Abuse Account to DMHAS for "prevention programs, including but not limited to, tobacco cessation programs and substance abuse disorder education programs". **These are the types of prevention programs that Regional Action Councils implement.** And according to the description, these dollars are *not* assigned specifically to the RACs.

In HB 6365, AAC THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2011, AND MAKING APPORPRIATIONS THEREFOR, Sections 35 (a) and (b), Regional Action Councils are funded for the next two fiscal year at <u>$600,000</u>. The Governor's budget eliminates DMHAS and state funds ($577,053) and transfers that $600,000 from the Pre-Trial account to DMHAS, for RAC funding.

HOWEVER, it fails to include the *previous* amount of <u>$500,000</u> from the Pre-Trial account. **This actually *reduces* RAC infrastructure funding by almost 50%.**

It is my urgent request on behalf of the Central Naugatuck Valley, to ask that the <u>$500,000</u> in SB 847, Section 58(d) be designated **specifically for Regional Action Councils** so that this vital infrastructure will be flat funded for the next two years.

This request WILL NOT require any adjustment to the bottom line of the Governor's budget.

The Regional Action Councils are the hub of substance abuse & addiction prevention in the State. RACs survey young people regarding their ATOD&G (Alcohol Tobacco Other Drugs and Gambling) use and abuse and the mitigating factors. RACs also convene top level and grassroots leaders in their communities to identify needs and develop resources to meet these needs.

Studies have proven that as the economy declines, substance abuse increases. We need to continue to be on the front lines in our communities. Insufficient funding will jeopardize the prevention infrastructure that CT has worked 20 years to build. In addition, the RAC structure is held up as a model by other states and the federal government. I remind you of the return on investment we provide.
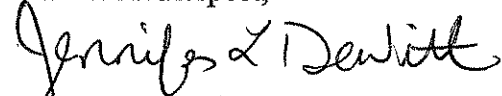
The Regional Action Councils utilize the State of Connecticut funds to leverage and match additional federal and local funding. In the past four years, we have collectively enhanced prevention services in the state by obtaining $6.5 million in federal and over $8 million in local dollars. These dollars would not be available to us if we did not have the state dollars to leverage or match them.

These dollars directly impact the communities you serve because we have been able to invest in local prevention activities. **I ask you to also remember that your return on investment is: <u>for every state dollar you allocate to RACs, we bring in over $4 in other funds, including federal and local</u>.** We need the state dollars to match these federal dollars as federal substance abuse block grant dollars can't be used to match additional federal dollars. Please do not break a system that is efficient, effective, and beneficial to both our communities and the state.

We recognize that this budget proposal is impacting many services and agencies in our state. However, the Regional Action Councils, and the prevention infrastructure as a whole, will be crippled without this important investment of State dollars.

Please call me at your convenience, with any questions regarding this most important issue. I am most grateful for your strong support of the CNVRAC and the Regional Action Councils as a whole.

With Great Respect,

Jennifer L. DeWitt, DARC, CPP-R

Executive Director, CNVRAC